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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the change in women workers' position in the labor market in China since economic reforms were started 10 years ago. The reforms which granted enterprises more decision-making power and caused the Chinese government to stop subsidizing maternity leave, time off for breast feeding, and nursery school, resulted in enterprises eliminating 63% to 80% of women workers in light and heavy industries. The study also examines women's access to on-the-job training (OJT) and analyzes problems women workers confront in the labor market. Two kinds of data were collected: literature about women was reviewed, and a survey was conducted in three factories in Beijing in June-July 1990. Interviews were conducted with educational leaders and factory supervisors. A questionnaire was distributed to 600 men and women workers; 505 questionnaires were returned. Two main historical factors contributed to the high involvement of Chinese women in the labor market: women's emancipation and China's economic development. Before the economic reforms, the number of employed women increased and women had a stable position in the labor market. After the economic reforms, women were clustered in low-skilled or unskilled jobs with low salaries. Women workers' educational attainment was better than that of men workers, but this did not help them gain more access to high-skilled and well-paid jobs. There was a positive relationship between OJT and women workers' jobs in terms of qualification, job security, salary, and promotion. Women workers did not enjoy the same access to OJT for these reasons: gender roles, practice of patriarchal ideology, and heavy burden of housework. Government initiative is needed to change women workers' positions in OJT and the labor market. (Contains 19 references.) (YLB)

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1. INTRODUCTION

China started its economic reforms ten years ago. The economic reforms have not only opened China's door to the outside world but have also made institutions in different fields of Chinese society adjust their mutual relationships. New methods for management, distribution, and employment have been worked out. As a result, the relationship between the state and enterprises, with regard to distribution, management and employment, is no longer centralized. The state takes responsibility for neither gains nor losses. Enterprises have been invigorated at its centre and have been granted more decision-making power, with the right to select the workers they need and eliminate those they do not.

Such reforms have introduced obvious and serious competition in the labour market. The Chinese government can no longer forcefully guarantee women's employment opportunities by setting quotas for different enterprises, since it has stopped subsidizing enterprises for women workers' maternity leave, time off for breast feeding and nursery schools. Women's position in the labour market is no longer stable. Women workers make up the majority of those eliminated by enterprises from 63% to 80% in both light and heavy industries (*China Daily*, March 8, 1989).

Facing the new situation in the labour market, what can women workers do if they want to create a stable position in the labour market? Bearing this question in mind, a survey was conducted in three factories in Beijing.

1.1 Specific Research Questions

In order to see how the position of women workers in the labour market has changed since the economic reforms and trace the problems of women workers in the labour market today, the research was conducted to explore the following specific questions:

1. What problems do women workers have now?
2. To what extent do women workers have access to the on-the-job technical and vocational training?
3. What are the effects of on-the-job training on women workers' job security and mobility in terms of promotion and salary as well as job qualification?

1.2 Research Methodology

In order to provide a clear picture of the transition in the women workers' position in the labour market, to examine women's access to on-the-job training, and to make a sound analysis of the problems women workers are confronted with in the labour market, two kinds of data have been collected. At the macro-level, literature about women at the national level was collected from the National Trade Union and All-China Women's Federation. Magazines such as Women of China and Study on Workers's Movement were also used.

At the micro-level, the survey was conducted in three factories in Beijing in June-July 1990. Due to the different problems of women workers in different industries, special attention was paid to the selection of the sample of factories, which included a heavy machinery factory, a television factory and a textile factory.

The techniques used in the survey are open and semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The interviews were conducted with some leaders in charge of on-the-job training and education, from the Ministry of Labour, and of factories surveyed. Based on the information derived from the interviews and the research questions, the questionnaire was designed and distributed among 600 workers aged 21-45 in different types of work. Two hundred questionnaires were distributed in each factory. In order to have a comparative study, men workers also received the questionnaire. The returned questionnaires numbered 505, or 84.1%, 201 of which were (39.8%) from men and 304 (60.1%) from women.

1.3 The Structure of the Paper

Section 1:

This section gives a historical outline of Chinese women's participation in the labour market. Two aspects will be covered. One is the background of Chinese women's high rate of participation in the labour market. The other is the women workers' position in the labour market both before and after China's economic reforms. In order to facilitate understanding the changes of the women workers' position, a brief review of the national socio-economic situation has also been offered.

Section 2:

The key purpose of this section is to examine the Chinese women workers' distribution in the labour market, both at the national level and at the survey level in the three factories.

Section 3:

Two aspects are discussed in this section. The first is the level of educational attainment of Chinese men and women workers, preceded by a brief description of the Chinese educational system. Based on the first aspect, the second focuses on the discussion of equity issues in terms of skill, job security, salary and promotion.

Section 4:

This section will explore the relationship between on-the-job training and employment, as well as women's access to on-the-job training based on data from the survey.

Section 5:

This section concerns the impact of technical and vocational training on women's work including its impact on women's job qualifications, salary and promotion.

Section 6:

This section traces the main constraints on women's access to on-the-job training, traditional ideology and the heavy burden of housework.

Section 7:

This section discusses the impacts of on-the-job technical and vocational training on women's jobs including the aspects of job qualification, security, salary and promotion.

Section 8:

Conclusions are drawn from the discussions in the previous sections as well as the research questions.

2. HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF CHINESE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

2.1 Background to Chinese Women's High Rate of Participation in the Labour Market

Before 1949, due to the influence of deeply rooted feudal patriarchal ideology which says that women serve at home while men work outside, more than 90% of Chinese women were considered as housewives. In the national liberation year, the national rate of urban employment in China was only 26.6% and of the total of employees, merely 7.5% were women (*Women of China* 1988, No. 9, p. 12). Only a small minority of Chinese urban women had their own income while the majority had to live on the income of others. This situation had deprived Chinese women of their human rights and social status for thousands of years until China's liberation.

The Chinese Communist Party came to power in 1949, since when the situation for Chinese women, has greatly changed. It has been one of the basic principles of the Chinese government to reach full equality for women in every field of economic, social and political activities. This government, like those in other socialist countries, has fully accepted the Marxist theory of women's emancipation, that women can only achieve emancipation if they get economic independence: "Women's emancipation can only be possible when women can participate in social [paid] production at a large scale and housework takes only a little of their time."* This implies that women may achieve social equality only by means of participation in paid economic activities. To realize this purpose, legal and other measures have been taken to create work opportunities for women, and to raise women's status both at home and in society through their contribution to the country's economic growth.

With the efforts of the government and the implementation of its principles, Chinese women's social status has gone through a tremendous change. Compared with their situation before China's liberation, women now enjoy more and more access to education, politics and economic life. The active participation of women in the labour market has enriched their life experiences and enhanced their equal relationship with others, both at home and in society. Today, 98% of urban women in the active population are working outside their homes (*Women of China*, 1989, No. 3, p. 5).

However, it must be pointed out that women's employment rate in the labour market was not only raised to emancipate them. Another important factor was the need for national economic development. In 1961, the Chinese government committed itself to the principle to adjust, consolidate, strengthen and increase the country's economy. Having drawn a lesson from the

* (The basic theory of Marxism on women's liberation in China, All-China Women's College, 1985. Translation: KFM).

previous three years (which was considered to be the hardest period in Chinese economic history because of incorrect policies on economic development, natural calamities and the sudden withdrawal of the Soviet technical experts), the government took strict control over the recruitment of people from rural areas. With the development and recovery of China's economy, industry required more people to work, and had to employ their new workers among the unemployed urban citizens in cities, who were mainly housewives. Women's high rate of involvement in the labour market became a solid fact and an indisputable state policy.
It can be concluded that two main factors contributed to the high involvement of Chinese women in the labour market: the need for women's emancipation, and the demand of China's national economic development.

2.2 The Transition in Chinese Women's Position in the Labour Market

2.2.1 *The National Socio-Economic Background*

To discuss the transition in Chinese women's position in the labour market it is necessary to review the Chinese socio-economic system in the past 40 years. This brief review is divided into two parts on the basis of the great policy changes by the end of 1978.

In the years from 1949 to 1978, China developed a centralized political, socio-economic structure. Concerning the systems in employment during this period, the government established the systems of "eating from the big public pot" and the "iron rice bowl."

The "eating from the big public pot" system is the essence of the absolute egalitarianism. With the practice of this system, each employee received a fixed wage from his or her enterprise regardless of work performance. Those who worked hard got the same as those who loafed around. A similar practice characterized relations between enterprises and the state. There were no rewards for well-run enterprises or penalties for poorly managed ones. The state took the whole responsibility of profit and loss.

The "iron rice bowl" is of the same nature. The only difference is that the "eating from the big public pot" is manifested in the distribution system and the "iron rice bowl" in the labour system. Under the "iron rice bowl" system, employment had only one channel..._...the unified state assignments, the state provided jobs for people. Once a person was employed by a state enterprise he was guaranteed a life-long job and a regular income determined according to the wage scale. No matter how his work performance was, he could not be fired unless he seriously violated criminal law. Enterprises had very limited power to transfer personnel. It was very difficult for enterprises to employ the people they needed or to transfer those they didn't need to other units. (*China After Mao*, p. 176, p. 180). As a result, the whole society lacked an efficient distribution of labour.

In addition to this, political movements were going on one after another, the Cultural Revolution alone taking ten years (1966-1976). Society as a whole was paralysed because of strong political movements and power struggles at a national level during this period of time. Therefore, China's socio-economic situation in the 30 years before the economic reforms was not satisfactory, and economic development was low.

The year 1978 was a turning point in Chinese history, especially economically. Economic reforms have abolished many of the practices mentioned above, and great changes have taken place in the employment systems. The responsibility and contract systems have been put into practice. Enterprises are granted more freedom in their management. They have the right to select employees they need and dismiss those they do not. They can enlarge or improve their enterprises with part of their profits and have to take the whole responsibility for their losses. Life-long employment no longer exists and the "big public pot" is completely broken. The relation between state and enterprises is of the same nature. Competition has also been brought into the labour market. Employees are paid on the basis of a new principle being 'more pay for more work'. Such reforms have brought great changes in the structure of ownership, production, management and administration, which have stimulated the development of science and technology.

2.2.2 *Women's Position in the Labour Market Before the Economic Reforms*

Due to the two factors mentioned in section 2.1, and the systems practised in the period before the economic reforms, the Chinese government has guaranteed women's right to work and has provided them with more opportunities to work outside the home. The state personnel department even set quotas for women to be employed when enterprises recruited new workers. And the state welfare system subsidized women employees by allowing them to take paid maternity leave and time off for breast feeding, also paying part of children's expenses in the nursery schools. Enterprises did not need to worry about the efficiency of their employees. To have men or women workers made no difference to them. Therefore, the practice of the system overcame many problems of women employees, such a lack of skills, and maternity leave. Instead, the number of employed women have kept increasing regularly and women have a stable position in the labour market.

In the years 1949 to 1957, the rate of women's employment rose from 7.5% to 13.4% of all employees. From 1957 to 1965, the number of women employees increased even more, from 13.4% to 21% of the total the employees in the state-owned and collectively run enterprises (*Women of China* 1988, No. 9, p. 13). In 1966, when the Chinese Cultural Revolution took place, almost everyone had to participate in the political movement. No regular work in education or in production could be performed. Therefore, it is not surprising that no regular recruitment of new employees took place. The increase in women's employment rate was not clear for the ten years of the Cultural Revolution. Generally speaking, women did not have any difficulty in getting jobs and keeping them. Women's problems in employment were not obvious in the years before the economic reforms. The employment rate of women was rising steadily, which has been regarded

as one of the two remarkable achievements in Chinese women's emancipation.

2.2.3 *Women's Position in the Labour Market Since 1979*

As was mentioned in section 2.2.1, economic reforms have broken the systems of "eating from the public pot" and the "iron rice bowl", practices which solved many of women's problems in the labour market and in fact supported women employees for many years. The reforms have also made enterprises pay much more attention to their profits and losses, because the responsibility and contract system have charged them with everything concerning their own profits and losses. This situation has inevitably influenced women's stable position in the labour market. Although the employment rate of women has increased to 36.6% of the total employment rate in 1986, (The study on the theory of workers' movement, 1988: 10), women's problems in the labour market have been exposed and women's position is no longer stable.

Some contracting units only want to maintain and increase their profits. They dislike or refuse to recruit women, or try to employ as few as possible assuming women are less efficient, have high welfare requirements and cost more because of nurseries, which affect the enterprises in terms of economy. Women's situation in collectively-owned enterprises became even worse. A lot of working mothers of young children were sent back home with monthly subsidies in order to hand over their posts to young men and save the cost of running nursery schools. Some of them have even had to leave their original posts and take up unskilled jobs with low pay. A number of women employees have been re-posted to subsidiary departments, others are waiting at home, with partial salaries, for reassignment.

3. WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN THE LABOUR MARKET

3.1 Distribution of Chinese women employees in the labour market

Ninety-eight percent of Chinese women in the active population are still working outside their homes in spite of their changing position in the labour market. (*Women of China*, 1989, No. 3). Women employees, based on the third census in 1982, work in many different fields and have contributed a lot to the social and economic development of China. But the distribution of women employees is not even among all branches in the labour market. The high involvement of women in the labour market did not completely change the traditional occupation segregation between men and women. Women are mostly clustered in the fields and jobs with lower responsibility and skills, while occupations connected with developing technology which carries social prestige have been largely dominated by male workers. The problems in women's occupations and in the structure of women's employment have become more and more obvious and institutional.

By the end of 1983, China had 42 million women employees, 87% of them physical labourers. Among a hundred female employees, 77 are engaged in agriculture, 13 are industrial workers, and 4 of them are shop assistants. Only 6 out of 100 serve at the higher professional level as managers, technicians and leaders at different levels (*Women of China* 1986, No. 4, p.8).

In order to have a better understanding of women's distribution in the labour market at the national level and the difference between men and women employees, the following table is provided (see table 1).

Table 1. **Employment by Occupation in China**

	Unit: ten thousand			
Occupation	Male	% of total male employees	Female	% of total female employees
Total	29367	100	2278	100
1. Science and Technology in Different Fields	1963	5.6	1013	4.4
2. State Organs and Organizations of Political Parties & Masses	729	2.5	84	0.4
3. Office and Other Related Workers	513	1.7	116	0.7
4. Trade and Business	510	1.7	432	1.9
5. Service	599	2.1	511	2.4
6. Farming, Forestry, Animal, Husbandry Side-line Production	19972	68.0	17566	77.1

and Fishing				
7. Manufacturing, Transportation and Other Related Personnel	5438	18.3	2953	13.0
8. Other Personnel	27	0.1	19	0.08

Source: The All-China Women's Federation 1989. Calculated on the basis of the third Census in 1982.

Table 1 shows that Chinese women are distributed in all fields at different levels. The percentage of women in categories 1, 2 and 3 is lower than the percentage of men, as these carry higher social prestige and are less manual. The percentage of women in categories 4, 5 and 6 is higher, which are either considered as unskilled work or manual work. The difference between men and women in categories 4 and 5 is marginal but in categories 3 and 6 it is considerable.

Therefore, there exists a bias in the employment structure. Although women employees do have access to most fields in the labour market, their levels of skill and performance are still lagging behind men. The majority of them are undertaking low-skilled or unskilled jobs with low social status.

The situation mentioned above is about the occupational distribution at the national level. How about women employees at the factory level? Generally speaking, men are engaged in skilled or semi-skilled work in all the three factories surveyed. The situation is the same. In order to have detailed information on women's jobs, the respondents were asked to identify their jobs. The answers of the 505 workers in the three factories are shown in Table 2:

Table 2. **Distribution of jobs by skill level**

Skilled		semi-skilled	skilled	highly skilled	others	total
Male	50 24.9%	31 15.4%	99 49.3%	2 6%	9 4.4%	201
Female	187 61.5%	44 14.5%	43 14.2%	5 1.6%	25 8.2%	304

Note: "others" means their jobs cannot be explained in terms of skill.

The answers of the respondents further proved that even in industry, at the factory level, women are highly concentrated in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, comprising 76% of the women surveyed. Only 15.8% of the women are engaged in skilled or high-skilled jobs. Looking at the situation of men workers we can find that 55.3% of them are working in jobs categorized as skilled or highly skilled. There is a great difference between men and women workers' occupations in terms of skill. Women workers are not really involved in the main body of the labour force. Therefore, women's role in the labour market is considered to be subordinate to that of men. Such a subordinate position in the labour market has determined the problems women have to face in China's rather tight labour market today.

4. LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF CHINESE MALE AND FEMALE WORKERS

4.1 Brief Review of Chinese Educational System

The education system in China can be divided into formal and non-formal education. Formal education includes pre-school education, primary, secondary and higher education. Non-formal education consists of literacy courses and adult education at different levels.

Pre-school education is mainly urban and usually starts at age three to prepare children for primary school. Primary education takes either five or six years. Its key task is to cultivate children's normal character and develop their basic literacy and maths skills. This is considered as compulsory education. Secondary education includes both junior and senior secondary education. Junior secondary education is three years of compulsory education. Graduates from junior secondary education who have passed the national examination will either go on to general senior secondary education or technical and vocational education at the senior secondary stage. General senior secondary education prepares students for higher education and senior technical and vocational education trains middle-level technicians and managers. The former takes two or three years to finish and the latter sometimes a fourth year depending on situation. Higher education comprises undergraduate and post-graduate studies. Undergraduate studies in most regular universities and colleges take four years. Medical colleges and some science and engineering universities courses take five years. Colleges for professional training usually take two or three years. Higher education is to train advanced personnel in different fields. The following diagram gives a clear picture of the Chinese formal educational system.

Besides the formal educational system, there exist various forms of non-formal education at different levels, such as literacy classes for adults, courses for adults in secondary education and various higher education courses by means of radio, television,or correspondence.

4.2 Educational Attainments of Male and Female Workers

It is generally accepted that education is a most significant variable in providing women with access to a wider variety of roles and the opportunity for more active participation in the economy of a country (AFAF 1979:5).

Since the Chinese liberation in 1949, a series of important reforms have been made in the Chinese educational system so as to eliminate all unequal stipulations which limited women's access to education. Women's increasing access to formal education is shown in table 4. (As the subject of this paper is workers, female access to higher education is omitted here. In China, those with higher education are generally not considered as workers.) Women workers surveyed should be in schools in this period of time.

Table 4. **Educational Attainment of Chinese Women**

Unit: ten thousand				
Year	Primary Education		Second Education	
	Female Students	Percentage	Female Students	Percentage
1951	1,206.3	28.0	40.12	25.6
1952	1,679.7	32.9	58.58	23.5
1953	1,782.2	34.5	71.44	24.4
1954	1,707.1	33.3	89.60	25.0
1955	1,775.8	33.4	104.95	26.9
1956	2,231.5	35.2	151.43	29.3
1957	2,215.9	34.5	193.53	30.8
1958	3,325.7	38.5	266.33	31.3
1959	3,566.9	39.1	286.08	31.2
1960	3,665.6	39.1	320.10	31.2
1962	2,406.7	34.8	256.43	34.1
1963	...	...	258.63	34.0
1964	3,250.5	35.0	291.51	34.1
1965	...	...	300.67	32.2
1973	5,527.2	40.7	1,136.91	33.0
1974	6,330.8	43.7	1,392.14	38.1
1975	6,824.3	45.2	1,753.71	39.3
1976	6,823.3	45.5	2,357.10	40.4
1977	6,632.1	45.4	2,825.39	41.7
1978	6,570.4	44.9	2,715.48	41.5
1979	6,577.4	44.9	2,410.52	40.8
1980	6,517.4	44.6	2,188.08	39.6
1981	6,301.2	44.0	1,895.37	39.0

Form: the Chinese Educational Year Book p. 1008 and p. 1024.

As a result, Chinese women's educational quality and level has been raised to some extent. See the following table:

Table 5. **The Percentage of Female Students in Education**

Level of Education	Percentage
Primary Education	45.4%
Secondary Education	40.8%
Higher Education	33%

Source: Chinese Educational Year Book 1987, p. 20.

However, due to different historical, cultural, economic and social causes, the educational level of Chinese women still lags behind that of Chinese men at the national level. The above table also indicates that the male educational level is higher than that of females at different levels. But this situation is very obvious in rural China. For example, 70% of illiterates in China today are female, and among these, more than 80% are living in rural China. So the educational situation of urban women is quite different from that of rural women, women in urban areas having more access to education. In urban areas, jobs were formerly assigned by the related department of the government; those who had not completed secondary education could hardly get a job, especially since 1968. Therefore, the gap between men and women in education in urban areas has not been obvious at primary and secondary levels.

The National Trade Union carried out an investigation of 0.64 million workers, of which 0.40 million were male and 0.24 were female. Their educational level is shown in table 6.

Table 6. **Percentage of men and women workers at different educational levels**

Number of workers	Less than primary	Primary level	Junior secondary	Senior secondary	College and university
0.4 million male workers	2.71	12.95	42.06	30.92	11.38
0.24 million female workers	1.99	9.71	44.57	36.84	6.92

Source: The National Trade Union 1986.

This table shows that 81.4% of the 0.24 million women workers had junior secondary or senior secondary education, while among the 0.40 men workers only 72.98% were of the same educational level. Female workers, in fact, are on average more highly educated than male workers.

These data were surprising and some researchers have expressed doubts about them. However, in 1987 the social department of the State Statistical Bureau made another investigation in 48 cities, covering 960 enterprises. The result of their investigation confirmed the findings. See Table 7:

Table 7. **A Comparison of male and female workers' educational level**

Educational level	Total Number of surveyed workers	female		male	
		Number	percent	Number	percent
Total	717941	252877	100	465064	100
higher education	51071	14067	5.6	37004	8.0
senior sec. education	235864	94143	37.2	141721	30.5
junior sec. education	325343	17930	46.6	207413	44.5
primary & less than primary education	105663	26737	10.6	78926	17.0

Source: All-China Women's Federation, 1989, 7.

From Table 7 it can be concluded that the percentage of women workers in higher education and primary education is lower than the percentage of men workers but, in senior and junior secondary education, women's percentage is higher than men's. Calculated on the basis of the above table, the average of male workers' educational attainment is 9 years and that of female workers is 9.4 years. It is striking that the results of my own survey, which included 304 women workers and 201 male workers in three different factories, are identical with these results. Table 8 shows the detail.

Table 8. **Number of male and female workers at different educational levels in three factories in Beijing**

Number of workers	Primary Education	Junior Secondary	Senior Secondary	University	Others	Total
Male	13 6.5%	101 50.2%	81 40.3%	4 2%	2 1%	201
Female	5 1.6%	130 42.8%	165 54.3%	3 1%	1 0.3%	304

Tables 6, 7 and 8, demonstrate that on the grounds of their educational level, female workers can compete with men in the labour market. One might assume that women's educational level has helped them to participate in the tight labour market. In fact, however, it does not seem to get them occupations with high skill and high social prestige. Why? The reasons underlying are traced in section 4.3, in which the equity issues will be discussed.

4.3 The Equity Issues

4.3.1 *Education Attainment and Skill Level*

In the last ten years, the Chinese government has officially made education a key priority in order to meet the demands of social and economic development. To realize the goal four modernizations were launched: agriculture, industry, national defense and science and technology.

Those with relatively higher education have been able to get jobs easily in the labour market since the economic reforms. Educational attainment is considered a most important factor for job categories in terms of skill. Therefore, one would expect a positive linkage between education attainments and skill level of jobs. The skill requirement for a person's job should be correlated with his/her educational attainments. Generally speaking, this positive linkage between educational attainment and opportunities for better jobs exists when the comparison is made among members of one sex. But, if the comparison is made between men and women's education attainment and their skill level of job, the expected positive linkage between the level of education and the skill cannot be found.

The discussions and tables in section 4.2 have shown that Chinese women workers' educational level is higher than that of men workers, both at the national level and at the level of this survey. But their jobs in terms of skill are generally lower than that of men workers. Women workers in China largely perform subsidiary work with lower responsibility and lower skill requirements. They are not really involved in the mainstream of the labour force. In this survey women workers are found to be highly clustered in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. (See Table 2 in section 3) and the expected positive relation between education attainment and job skill level concerning women workers is not as strong as among men workers. Tables 9 and 10 provide the details.

Table 9. Educational attainment and job skill level in a textile factory

Type of jobs		Primary Education	Junior Sec. Educ.	Senior Sec. Educ.	Higher Sec. Educ.	Total Number	Percentage
unskilled	Male	3	6	0	0	9	18
	Female	4	27	52	0	83	73.5
semi-skilled	Male	0	5	5	0	10	20
	Female	0	3	8	0	11	9.7
skilled	Male	1	12	10	3	26	52
	Female	0	2	10	0	12	10.6
others	Male	1	3	1	0	5	10
	Female	0	3	4	0	7	6.2
Total		9	61	90	3	163	100

Source: survey data, Male 50, and Female 113

Table 10. Educational attainment and job skill-level in a heavy machinery factory

Type of jobs		Primary Education	Junior Sec. Educ.	Senior Sec. Educ.	Higher Educ.	Total Number	Percentage
unskilled	Male	2	8	2	0	12	11.5
	Female	0	17	13	0	30	35.2
semi-skilled	Male	0	10	4	0	14	13.5
	Female	0	11	4	0	15	17.8
skilled	Male	4	42	30	0	76	73.1
	Female	0	12	16	1	29	34.1
others	Male	2	0	0	0	2	1.9
	Female	0	5	6	0	11	12.9
Total		8	105	75	1	189	100

Source: survey data, male 104 and female 85.

Tables 9 and 10 indicate that the educational level of men workers in these two factories is lower than that of women workers at secondary educational level. But their job skill level is higher than that of women workers.

4.3.2 *Education Attainment and Job Security*

During the 1980s, economic reforms and the return of some 20 million young people, who had been assigned to work in rural areas for re-education during the Cultural Revolution, have made many people redundant in the Chinese labour market (*Women of China* 1986, 6). Employment has become an explosive social problem in China. According to incomplete statistics, the reorganization of the labour force has contributed to about 20 million workers becoming surplus in state-owned enterprises across China (*Beijing Review*, Vol. 31, No. 51, 1988, p.18). The labour surplus has provided a large pool for enterprises to select their needed employees from, since the

economic reforms have given enterprises greater power to hire and fire. Some enterprises started to reduce the numbers of their employees in order to raise their profits and increase the efficiency of employees. In this case, job security has been eliminated and competition has obviously appeared in the labour market.

As a general rule, employees with a better education should enjoy more security in their jobs since the economic reforms have emphasized education as a key to China's development, and also have made the raising of labour force quality a main task on the agenda of enterprises. It is true that the enterprises, in the last decade, have paid attention to the educational attainment of the employees and educational level in selecting employees. But in the selection process of men and women workers there is a clear tendency to select men, even if their educational level is lower than that of their female counterparts. Some enterprises often set high standards for unemployed girls and low ones for boys when they hire new employees by examination. It was reported that 80-90% of enterprises expressed their need for only male employees at the meeting in April 1987 in Beijing. (*Beijing Review* Vol. 31. No. 28, 1988)

A recent investigation made by the National Trade Union in 660 state and collectively-owned enterprises, in eleven of the 30 provinces of the country, showed that nearly 63% of the workers eliminated were women. The figure is as high as 80% in some heavy industries (*China Daily*, March 8, 1989).

Some enterprises use their newly gained powers to discriminate against women. They dislike or refuse to recruit women or try to employ as few as possible by various means. When asked, some pointed out that women were not as strong as men and therefore not physically suited to their jobs. Others claimed that once women got married they would be burdened with housework and child-care and would therefore be unable to concentrate on their jobs.

It was reported that the Beijing Tong-Feng Television factory dismissed 100 workers, three-fourths of whom were women workers. The electronic picture tube factory laid off 30 employees, all of whom were women. (*Women of China* 1987, No. 8, p. 20).

Nationally, women are facing increasing insecurity of employment. In order to learn how employed women's position in the labour market is decided, and how they feel about this insecurity, the respondents in the survey were asked how confident they are in keeping their present jobs without further training. Their answers are varied, but there is a clear tendency for men to feel more job security than women, although women's educational level is competitive. The following tables give the details:

Table 11. **Workers' confidence in keeping their present job without further training**

	Insecure	Secure	Not Sure	Total
Male	18 8.9%	91 45.3%	92 45.8%	201 100%
Female	7 5.6%	85 28%	202 66.4%	304 100%

Moreover, among the 505 respondents, 173 have changed their jobs. Sixty-six are men and 107 are women. The reasons for changing jobs are different. See table 12.

Table 12. **Reasons for change of job**

	No interest	Lower salary	Not qualified	Need of work	Other	Total
Male	13 19.7%	35 53.1%	2 3 %	14 21.2%	2 3 %	66 100%
Female	14 13.1%	26 24.3%	12 11.2%	44 41.1%	11 0.3%	107 100%

Note: The "work-based necessity" has two interpretations: either the work is considered not suitable for women or women have to leave their present job out of the so-called work-based necessity, obliged to change to a post they do not like.

The above table shows that 53.1% of the small respondents changed their jobs to increase their salaries; 19.5% for a lack of interest in their previous jobs and of their own accord. Many women (41.1%) have changed their jobs partly on the decisions of their superiors because the need of work is usually decided by unit leaders; 11.2% changed jobs because they were not qualified for their previous jobs. This also marks women workers as passive and insecure in the labour market.

4.3.3 *Education Attainment and Salary*

Compared with the equity issues in access to greater job skill and job security, the general inequality in salary is not explicit. In China, the principle "equal pay for equal work" has been generally applied. The questionnaires in the survey covered questions such as: 1. "Do men and women workers enjoy equal work and equal pay in your work unit?" 2. "Do the men workers have a higher salary than female workers who were recruited with them the same year?" The responses to the two questions are shown in Tables 13 and 14:

Table 13. **"Do men and women workers enjoy equal pay and equal work"?**

	Same	Little difference	Much difference	Don't know	Total
Male	100 49.8%	58 28.8%	25 12.4%	18 9%	201 100%
Female	126 41.5%	105 34.5%	28 9.2%	45 14.8%	304 100%

Table 14. **"Do the male workers have a higher salary than women workers employed together with them at the same time"?**

	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Male	26 12.9%	136 67.7%	39 19.4%	201 100%
Female	64 21.1%	180 59.2%	60 19.7%	304 100%

These two tables show no great differences in salary between men and women workers who are engaged in the same job and started working in the same year. However, if we bear in mind that the majority of women perform the unskilled jobs with low pay, the equity issue in terms of salary arises. Although there is no significant difference between men and women workers in education in secondary educational level, women are largely clustered in unskilled jobs which determine their low salaries. Chinese women workers do not enjoy equality
with men workers as officially expected. As a matter of fact, gender discrimination is common practice in China.

5. WOMEN'S ACCESS TO ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

5.1 The relation between on-the-job training and employment

In China today, on-the-job technical and vocational training is considered an efficient way to increase the quality of the labour force, since on-the-job training is closely linked to the production need in the labour market. It aims at the improvement of the employees' working capacity and provides all levels of training programmes which will meet the participant's needs to reach the standards required by their posts, to change posts, to attain necessary qualifications for promotion, or to satisfy the demands of certain work. Therefore, it is generally accepted that the relation between on-the-job training and employment is a positive one.

With the intensification of economic reforms and the development of mechanization, the conflict between the needs of production and the lower quality of labour force has become more and more obvious. Generally speaking, the lower quality of the labour force can never meet the demands of industrial development without additional training. This problem has attracted the attention of the Ministry of Labour and of the leaders of enterprises, so more and more enterprises have been put on the on-the-job training scheme since the early 1980s. Many thousands of workers have been trained in recent years and the kinds of on-the-job training have greatly developed compared with last 30 years. In interviews with leaders of the Ministry of Labour and of some factories, it appeared that they consider on-the-job training to have a very positive relation with employment, and that they put high hopes on it. They think that poor labourer quality has negative effects on production quality, production safety, productivity and profits. To change this situation, on-the-job training is regarded as a short-cut. But what is the workers' point of view on such training? Do they think that they can benefit from it? Their responses to the questions regarding this kind of training are revealing.

In the survey, the respondents were asked to answer the question "how much do you think technical and vocational training could help women workers to do their present work?" Out of 505 respondents, 369 thought that on-the-job training would help women to do their work better. The rest did not mention their opinions since they had been asked not to answer these questions if they were not clear about them.

The Chinese present labour market has a surplus of unskilled labour force and lacks skilled personnel and workers with skills, even at the elementary level. Nowadays, anyone with skills can get a job easily and usually remain employed for life, despite the tight labour market. For example, one working unit in Beijing has recruited a young man, who had been re-educated through enforced labour for several years because of his crimes (re-education through labour is a form of punishment in China). The reason for the working unit to recruit him, instead of others, is that he learned professional cooking during the years of unemployment (source: Zhan Lan Lun training Centre, August, 1989). Moreover, workers with skills are usually assigned to a more

responsible job with higher social esteem and income. Women workers with fresh skills could also have a strong position in the labour market today. Therefore, training opportunities for women are urgently needed to increase their employment qualifications, to prevent their crowding into low-paid, unskilled employment in the limited occupations, and to promote upward mobility.

The above discussion supports the conclusion that on-the-job technical and vocational training undoubtedly helps workers to do their work well, especially helping women to hold their positions in the labour market.

5.2 Women's access to on-the-job training

5.2.1 *Demands for On-the-job Training*

Owing to the weak foundation of China's vocational and technical education, and the short history of pre-employed training, the majority of the potential labour force could hardly receive technical and vocational training before they were employed. Women's access to it is even more limited than men's. In order to explore women's access to technical/vocational training before employment, respondents were asked whether they had taken part in any training course before they were employed. Of 201 male respondents, 71 (35.3%) had had this training while of 304 female responses only 78 (25.7%) had had training.

However, facing today's competition in the tight labour market, women have realized that their technical level do not meet the needs of reforms, and they have felt the pressure of competition including the increasing danger of being eliminated. The question "What is the difficulty that worries you the most?" was posed in one of the factories in Hebei Province. The responses of 79% of the women workers in the survey was that they were worried about their professional ability and lack of vocational training, as well as about their limited educational background (*Studies on Workers' Movement* 1986, No. 7, p.19).

This survey has also shown that most women workers are not quite sure if they can keep their present jobs without technical and vocational training, and they are eager to have training opportunities. The only difference is in the motivations for their desire to participate in technical and vocational training. Table 15 shows the details:

Table 15. **Desire to participate in technical and vocational training**

	Higher salary	Promotion	Better Job	Good Reputation	To do the Present Work Well	Other	Total
Male	50 24.9%	17 8.4%	22 11%	8 4%	95 47.2%	9 4.5%	201
Female	53 17.4%	8 2.6%	62 20.4%	7 2.3%	152 50%	22 7.3%	304

This table demonstrates that there is little difference between men and women in the percentage who want to do their present work. But the percentage wanting a better job, higher salary or promotion appears to differ greatly between sexes. More men want to raise their salary and get promotion through training while more women want to obtain a better job by means of training. Seventy-four percent of women choose to get a better job or to do their present work well, demonstrating not only women's position in the labour market but also how women workers need access to on-the-job training.

5.2.2 *Possibilities for, and actual access of women workers to on-the-job training*

In China, it is generally accepted that technical and vocational training could permit women workers to become involved in those areas of production which are highly valued in society, and could help to keep the women workers' position in the labour market stable. Women workers especially need on-the-job training. This provokes the following question: What are the possibilities for men and women to have opportunities of on-the-job training?

To get the answer to this question, the questionnaire in the survey included the question: " How do you perceive the possibility of your enjoying on-the-job training". The answers are shown in the following table.

Table 16. **Perceived possibilities for their getting on-the-job training**

	Not Possible	Possible	Quite Possible	Don't Know	Total
Male	40 19.9%	110 54.7	13 6.5%	38 18.9%	201 100%
Female	134 44%	85 28%	15 5%	70 23%	304 100%

This table indicates that only 33% of the women are sure that they can get training, while 67% of the male workers think they will have the opportunity for training. Male workers are more confident than female workers of getting training opportunities. This must be explained not only by their self-confidence, but also by the sex priorities currently laid in China. By principle, women workers enjoy the same degree of access to on-the-job training as their male colleagues, and some of the female workers really think they have the same opportunities as men with regard to training. The answers to the question "to what extent do you think women workers could get opportunities for training?" are shown in table 17.

Table 17. **The Perception of male and female workers of women's training opportunities**

	Easier than men	Same as men	More difficult than men	No idea	Total
Male	15 7.5%	103 51.2%	39 19.4%	44 21.9%	201 100%
Female	18 5.9%	78 25.7%	105 34.5%	103 33.9%	304 100%

Of the women, 34.5% think they have more difficulties in obtaining opportunities for technical and vocational training, and 33.9% have no idea. Only 33 out of the total number of 505 respondents answered that women will get training opportunities more easily than men. In fact, women have more limited access to training both before and after employment. My survey supports this, as is shown in Table 18.

Table 18. **The number of trained and untrained workers in the factories**

	After Employment		
	Trained	Untrained	Total
Male	125 62.2%	76 37.8%	201 100%
Female	138 45.3	166 54.7%	304 100%

The above table indicates that women workers do not enjoy the same access to on-the-job training as men. Now, in order to have a further understanding of women workers' limited access to on-the-job technical and vocational training, let us analyse a specific case of on-the-job training in one of the three factories in the survey.

A heavy machinery factory in Beijing has 7082 staff members in total, including 4687 male and 2395 female. Among them there are 1482 leaders at different levels, 988 of whom are male and 494 female. The total number of workers is 5600, of which 3699 workers are male and 1901 are female. This factory was regarded as one of the model factories for on-the-job education and training. In 1988 it trained 532 employees for different purposes at different levels. Among these 532 trained employees, 437 were male and only 95 were female. There exists a great gap between women and men in getting training opportunities. This is clearly expressed in table 19.

Table 19. **The Number of trained men and women employees in 1988**

	Senior Workers	Workers of Electric Furnace	On-Purpose Directed Training	Technicians	Total
Male	143	63	18&	45	437
Female	15	14	64	2	95

Source: A heavy machinery factory in Beijing, June 1989.

From the data submitted, we can conclude that Chinese women workers do not have the same access to on-the-job training as men workers do. But this phenomenon can no longer be explained by lower education since we know that the educational level of women workers is even a little better than that of men. The question thus remains: What are the main reasons that prevent women from getting training opportunities? In the following section attention will be paid to the discussion of the main factors that effect women's participation in on-the-job technical and vocational training.

6. CAUSES CONTRIBUTING TO WOMEN'S LIMITED ACCESS TO ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

6.1 Gender and access to on-the-job training

In the previous sections it was demonstrated that the limited access of women to on-the-job training is shaking their position in the tight and competitive labour market. To widen women workers' access to on-the-job training, it is better and necessary to look into the causes hampering the access of women workers to on-the-job training.

There are many different obstacles to women workers' participation in on-the-job training. Considering the scope of this paper, we could not discuss them one after another. Here, on the basis of interviews and responses in the survey and other relevant literature, the gender role of women is revealed as a key factor preventing women's access and participation in on-the-job training. The gender role here means the social construction of men and women; the way they are conditioned socially and ideologically to take certain roles at home and in society.

China has tried to advocate equality between men and women from the year it was liberated in 1949. To reach equality, many specific measures have been worked out and their implementation attempted. Chinese women's status both at home and in society has been greatly improved.

However, the male-dominated nature of society has not really changed. Gender discrimination can easily be seen in different sections of Chinese society today. Men have an advantageous position in society, causing many difficulties for women. Owing to their gender role women, generally speaking, do not enjoy the same rights as men in certain levels of education, in occupations nor in promotion.

The situation in on-the-job training is the same. The role of gender has, to some extent, blocked women workers' access to on-the-job training. How the gender role influences women's access to on-the-job training in a direct or indirect way will be discussed in the following section.

6.2 Traditional Ideology

China is a country with more than three thousand years of written history. During this long period, China was a male-dominated country. Patriarchal ideology was the leading ideology in China and its essence was that men are 'superior' and women 'inferior'. "Men deal with business outside the home, while women have to do all kinds of housework at home." With the strong influence of this ideology in ancient Chinese society, women were deprived of social status and had no say at home or in society.

After Chinese liberation, as we mentioned in previous sections, a tremendous change took place in Chinese women's lives. They not only have a say at home because of their economic independence and economic contributions to their families, but also have their own independent social status in society. However, to reach true equality with men in practice and to wipe out the influence of the patriarchal ideology in the present Chinese society are tasks that cannot be easily nor rapidly performed.

In China today, forty years after its liberation, patriarchal ideology still has a strong hold. Its influence has penetrated the breadth of society as well as of the socialization of people. It is not surprising that the influence of this patriarchal ideology has brought difficulties to women's participation in on-the-job training. Men are highly valued as efficient workers, while women are devalued as inefficient. Gender inequality has prevailed in different fields. Thus, in working units, leaders of enterprises prefer to give the training opportunities to male workers rather than to women workers. Some leaders of enterprises do not support women workers' participation in on-the-job training because they consider it as a waste of time and money. My survey of three factories in Beijing indicates that the lack of leaders' support has been an obstacle to women workers' access to on-the-job training.

Traditional patriarchal ideology has also provided a sex priority of men in Chinese society. This concept of sex priority is generally accepted by both men and women. In the survey, when the respondents were required to answer the question "which sex has a better opportunity to attend on-the-job training?", among the 344 respondents to the question, 247 replied that men workers have a better opportunity to get on-the-job training. The reasons for this response were different, as demonstrated by some of the answers:

1. men have better memories than women;
2. men are good at learning new things;
3. men learn new technology more easily;
4. men's receiving and understanding abilities are higher than those of women;
5. men are usually engaged in skilled jobs which provide them with more opportunities for on-the-job training;
6. men have little housework and plenty of time to study;
7. business managers usually think that men are worth being trained;

   etc.

Both sex priority and the strong influence of traditional patriarchal ideology act as obstacles to the access of women to on-the-job training.

Within a family, the husband is generally considered as the master, either in reality or potentially. So the husband has the priority to attend a training course if there is a conflict of time in attending a training course. Because the wife is supposed to fulfil her main responsibility (i.e.

housework) first. In my survey, when the respondents were asked to answer "who do you think should take the main responsibility of the housework?", 281 of the 505 respondents answered 'women' and only 48 answered 'men'. The reasons given for thinking that women have to take the main responsibility for housework were varied:

1. women are good at doing housework;
2. according to Chinese traditional ideology, women should be in charge of the housework, men should pay more attention to their work and make achievements in their work;
3. it has been considered a virtue that women take good care of their children and husbands, and manage the housework well;
4. women have more experience in doing housework, while men have more experience at wage employment;
5. it is God's will that women should do housework and men should not;

   etc.

The traditional patriarchal ideology, then, has been working against women both in the family and in society at large. Moreover, some women have themselves been seriously influenced by the traditional patriarchal ideology, thinking that women are inferior to men and should take responsibility for the housework. Many women have a sense of inferiority and think they could never compete with men in any field. They also consider that housework is work for women. In addition, an investigation shows that 67% of women are mainly seeking personal happiness. Among the women who devote themselves mainly to their work, 100% of them dare to compete when their opponents are also women, while if their opponents are men only 33% said that they would try to compete (*Women of China* 1989, No. 1).

Some employed women put their housework responsibilities first and wage employment second. They do not make a great effort to improve their qualifications for employment and to learn fresh skills. What they want is to raise their social status through their husbands' social reputation and achievements in work. All these facts have indicated that the traditional patriarchal ideology has really a strong influence on people's minds in China, which has been accepted to be one of the main obstacles to women's equality in practice, including access to on-the-job training.

6.3 Heavy Housework Burdens

With the development of Chinese society, people's living standards have increased, especially during the last ten years. Family life tends to be modernized. But as the housework could not be fully socialized, most employed women have to take the main responsibility for housework according to the traditional division of labour. Therefore women, like in other socialist countries, have to bear double burdens: paid work and unpaid housework. In nuclear families, couples usually share housework, but the main responsibility still remains with women. The investigation of 0.24 million workers which was conducted by the national trade union has indicated that the

number of wives doing housework more than two hours per day has tended to increase, while the number of husbands doing housework more than two hours per day has tended to decrease. The following graphs show this very clearly.

Another related study shows that women around 25-40 years old have very heavy housework burdens besides their eight hours of work in society. The time wives spend on housework in nuclear families is about 4.4 hours, while that of husbands averages around 2.3 hours. (*Studies on the Theory of Workers' Movement*, 1987, No. 6, p.45). The survey has indicated the same situation. Table 20 shows the difference between men and women workers in doing housework.

Table 20. **Time for doing housework per day**

	Less than 1 hour	1-2 hours	3-4 hours	More than 5 hours	Not mentioned	Total
Male	40 19.9%	75 37.3%	35 17.4%	10 5%	41 20.4%	201 100%
Female	12 3.9%	47 15.5%	147 48.4%	67 22%	31 10.2%	304 100%

The above facts, graphs and table decidedly prove that women have a heavy housework burden which takes half or even most of their spare time. It is the housework - an unvalued, unpaid job - that takes women much time and energy, reduces women's time for study and training, and affects women's opportunities for improving their work qualifications. Their heavy housework burden is one of the main factors preventing the attendance of women in training courses, and enlarging differences between men and women's employment qualifications in China's labour market today.

7. IMPACTS OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING ON WOMEN'S JOBS

7.1 On Women's Job Qualification and Security

In the previous sections it was discussed that women's situation in the labour market has been changing, more and more women being driven to do the bulk of low-paid and low-skilled jobs. Some even have to wait reassignment at home. To change such a situation, on-the-job training is likely to be efficient since the relationship between on-the-job training and employment has generally turned out to be a positive one. We now come to examine how much does on-the-job training can raise job qualification. In order to learn the point of view of workers on the question, respondents in the survey were asked how they were qualified for their jobs after training. Their answers are presented in table 21.

Table 21. **Perceived qualification for work after training**

	Not Very Qualified	Qualified	Highly Qualified	Not mentioned	Total
Male	7 3.6%	107 54.6%	52 26.5%	30 15.3%	196 100%
Female	7 3.3%	125 57.9%	62 28.7%	22 10.1%	216 100%

Note: The total number of trained workers is 412, including both before and after employment.

The table shows that 81.1% of men workers and 86.6% of women workers think they are qualified or even highly qualified for their job after training. In this context, the workers in the survey were also asked how they felt about their qualifications for their job without training. The responses are indicated in table 22:

Table 22. **Perceived qualification for job without training**

	Not Qualified	Poorly	Moderately	Highly	Total
Male	13 7.8%	55 32%	76 45.2%	24 14.3%	168
Female	22 8.7%	65 25.8%	110 43.7%	55 21.8%	252

Note: some of the trained workers have also answered this question.

Making a comparison between tables 21 and 22, one can see workers definitely felt on-the-job training would improve their qualifications. Furthermore, 369 (73.1%) of the total of 505 respondents thought on-the-job training would help women workers to do their work better.

If on-the-job training improves job qualification, it should also increase job-security, since there is a close linkage between job qualification and job security. Respondents were asked to give their opinions on the question "How much do you think trained women would benefit from their technical and vocational training in holding their present job?" Seventy-three percent thought on-the-job training would help women to keep their jobs at different levels while the rest of them (26.9%) were not sure. (This indicates that some other factors, such as gender discrimination, preference for men in the labour market also influence women's job security, which was discussed in section 2.) Table 23 provides the details:

Table 23. **How much do you think women workers would benefit from their technical and vocational training in holding their jobs?**

	A Little	Somewhat	Very much	Don't know
Male	74 36.8%	73 36.3%	19 9%	35 17.4%
Female	91 30%	65 21.4%	4 15.5%	101 33.2%

From the above discussion, one can conclude that on-the-job training can generally play a positive role in the increase of job qualifications and security at different levels.

7.2 On Women's Salary and Promotion

Generally speaking, the relationship between on-the-job training with salary and promotion is not as close as with job qualifications and security. Workers' salary is largely determined by his/her type of job and number of working hours, little consideration being given to the performance of workers. According to the information from the TV factory, the increase of salary was usually carried out on the basis of Pu-Tiao, which means if there is an opportunity, every worker can have a pay-rise adding to his original basic pay unless he or she had fallen out of favour. The basic salaries of workers are determined by the skill level of their jobs, the main differences being determined by place of work. In principle, workers on a production line have higher incomes than for example as office workers.

Economic reforms have now replaced the policy of egalitarianism by a new method in which workers are paid mainly on the basis of their skills and work performance. But it takes time to put this into practice on a large scale since the former practice still has a strong influence. It is hardly accepted, for example, that a young skilled worker has a higher salary than an old worker who is not as good as the young one in terms of skilled work performance. Therefore, on-the-job training does not yet have a determining impact on one's salary and promotion.

Nevertheless, in order to know how far the on-the-job training influences salary and promotion, six questions in the survey were put forward to measure the differences of trained and untrained workers in salary and promotion. Over 25% of responses said that trained workers enjoy priority of salary increases and promotion; 45.7% expressed the belief that trained and untrained workers have the same opportunities to salary increase and promotion; 2.2% held the view that trained workers have even less chance than untrained workers of a salary increase or promotion and 27% gave no opinion since they were asked not to answer the questions if they did not know.

The above discussion focuses on the general situation of trained and untrained workers. Coming to the situation of trained women workers and untrained men workers, 20% of the respondents think trained women workers can have a higher salary and better chances of promotion, around 43% say that trained women workers and untrained men workers have the same opportunities in salary increase and promotion, about 3.1% held the view that trained women workers have less

opportunity than even untrained men workers. The rest did not answer the question.

On the basis of responses in the survey, one finds that although there is a slight difference in the positive contribution of on-the-job training for men and women, it is still beneficial to women in gaining salary rises and promotion.

8. CONCLUSIONS

How has the women workers' position changed in the labour market? How has the women workers' access to on-the-job training improved and what are the effects of the on-the-job training on womens' jobs? The discussion in the previous sections has left out a general picture of Chinese women workers in the labour market. In the discussion, the problems and limited access of women workers to on-the-job training as well as some gender equity issues have clearly been exposed by the data from the survey. The findings of the survey can be summed up as follows:

1. The economic reform has brought a lot of changes in the country's economic situation but, at the same time, it also brought many problems for women. Women's position in the labour market has changed from stable to unstable and women face problems such as job insecurity. The jobs most women workers occupy are characterized as semi or unskilled ones with low salary.

2. Women workers' educational attainment at the secondary level is better than that of men workers. However, this does not help women in gaining more access to high-skilled and well-paid jobs, nor does it make a clear contribution to women's stable position in the present labour market.

3. There is a positive relation between on-the-job training and women workers' job in terms of qualification, job security, salary and promotion. Access to on-the-job training can both improve job qualification and increase job security. Access to on-the-job training also creates the opportunities for higher salary and promotion. But the problem is that women workers do not enjoy the same access to on-the-job training because of different reasons.

4. Although the causes affecting women's access to on-the-job training are different, the main ones are found to be gender roles, the practice of traditional patriarchal ideology, and the heavy burden of housework. The common practice of these factors in Chinese society in the last ten years has prevented women from more access to training.

However, it also turned out that the strength of the survey is limited. Some of the questions could not be answered with the findings of the survey, for example, what kind of training do women workers need? Do they need the same kinds of training as their men colleagues? If yes, why? If not, how? Why has the traditional patriarchal ideology been of such vitality in China in the last 40 years, especially in the last ten years? To get the objective answers to these questions needs further research. At the same time, it has been noticed that some questions in the questionnaire were not well put, for example, the six questions about the differences in promotion and salary between trained and untrained workers were too general to be useful as expected.

Nevertheless, with the discussion and findings of the research, we can come to the following primary conclusion.

China has made some achievements in women's economic independence by means of a high involvement of women in the labour market, which has been considered as a key to women's emancipation in China. However, China has failed to ensure gender equality in the labour market. There exist a lot of problems concerning women's employment such as uneven distribution, less job opportunity and less job security. The causes of the problems are various but the central one is women's subordination has been narrowed in terms of economic dependence and the other causes of gender equality are officially intact. There are no concrete laws and effective measures to ensure women's equal rights and eliminate gender discrimination in the labour market. As a result, when the state subsidies to women workers in all enterprises was stopped owing to the economic reforms, gender hierarchy became powerfully alive again, the patriarchal ideology was openly been reinforced in the labour market, which has threatened women's stable economic independence today.

The sex-division of labour has become more obvious again and socially accepted in China. More and more women in the labour market have been driven to the low-skilled, low-paid posts related to their traditional role. At home, women are by 'nature' considered the suitable persons to bear the primary responsibility for the housework. In fact, women have to bear a double burden which includes the paid job in the labour market and unpaid work at home. Such a heavy double burden has caused a lot of problems for women. Instead of taking concrete measures to solve them, both the government and the All-China Women's Federation have encouraged women, through the mass-media to fulfil their double roles with their own efforts. Thus, Chinese women have been struggling between their double roles, which have taken most of their spare time and energy, actually prevented women from upward mobility and even contributed somewhat to women's inferior position in the competitive labour market in an indirect way.

To change the women workers' position in on-the-job training and the labour market, it requires official initiative and concern at the government level. Otherwise it is impossible for China to reach gender equality in practice, as it intends.

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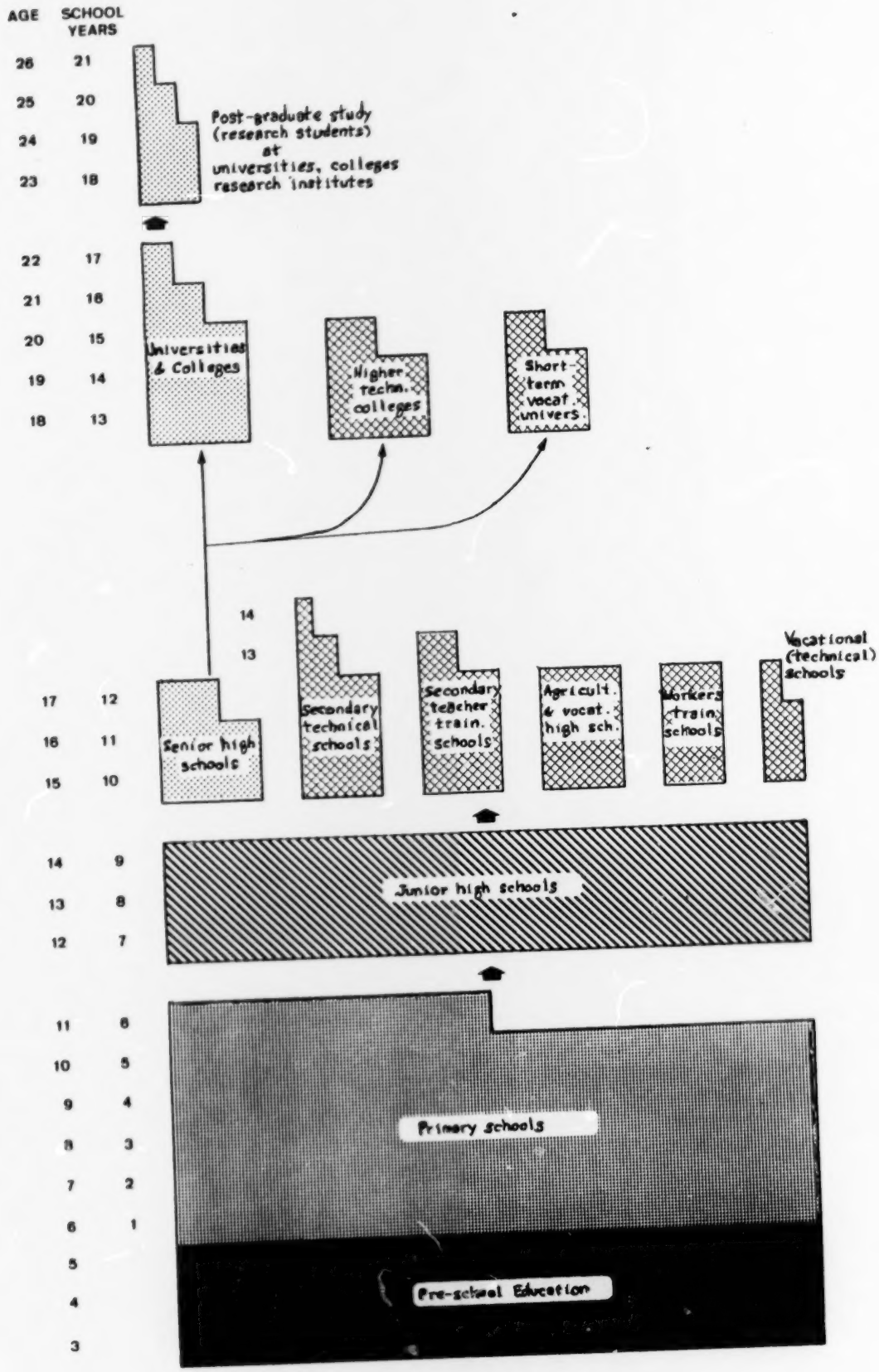

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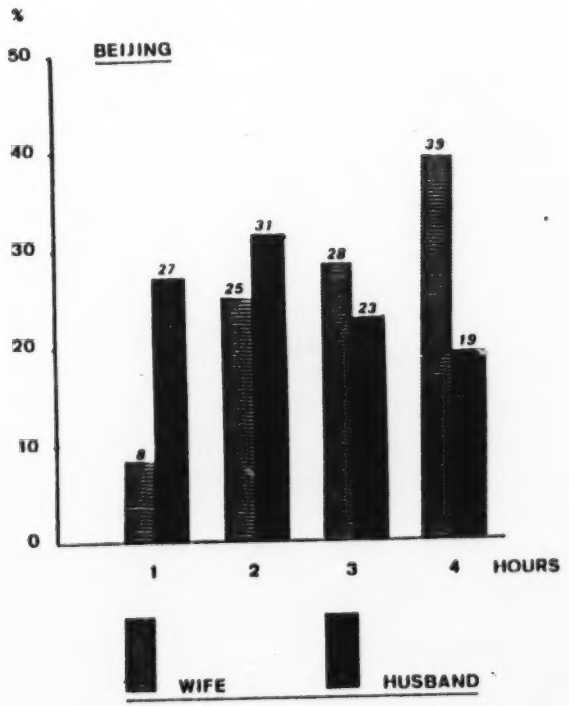
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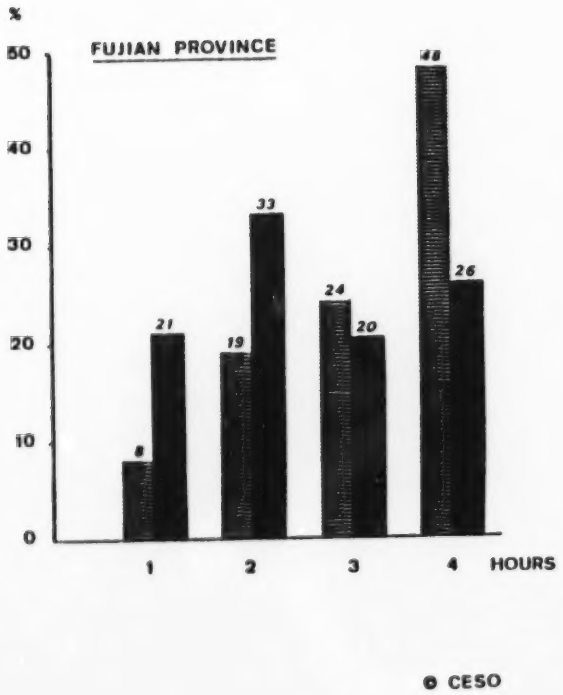
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